



**AN ASSESSMENT OF SERVICE QUALITY OF INTERNET SERVICE
PROVIDERS: A CASE OF SKYBAND CORPORATION LTD**

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ABSTRACT

This study assesses the service quality of internet provided by Skyband Corporation Limited, an Internet service provider that has been in this business for about eleven years, competing with over five other internet service providers in this business sector.

The reason to study this was prompted by the levels of dissatisfaction that were registered from some existing customers. The aim of the study was to ascertain the levels of satisfaction/dissatisfaction from customers. In doing this, a service quality measurement model of SERVQUAL by Parasuraman (1994) was used. This is the model mostly used by those that have studied similar topics, it measures the perception of the customer before a service encounter and after the service delivery. Other objectives included:- To analyse the processes that are in place to enhance quality of service and best practices, to identify bottlenecks to the provision of quality services, to identify strategies on improving quality of service, to provide a recommended framework on management of service quality. Both primary and secondary research were used in coming up with the results herein.

After the research was conducted, it transpired that Skyband Corporation Limited provides satisfactory services to its customers though with a number of problems that requires management attention in order to perfect the service. Paying attention to the problems identified and providing long term solutions would mean heading for a business success through provision of highly satisfactory internet services to customers.

ACRONYMS

ISP	-	Internet Service Provider
LTD	-	Limited
MACRA	-	Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority
IP	-	Public Internet Protocol
MPLS	-	Multi-protocol Label Switching
VPN	-	Virtual private network
SLA	-	Service Level Agreement
VSAT	-	Very small aperture terminal
IT	-	Information technology
TQM	-	Total quality management
4G	-	Fourth generation

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces the topic under study and discusses why it was important to assess the service quality of internet at Skyband Corporation Limited. Aim of the study, objectives, research questions, significance of the study and the study report.

1.1 Background

This study assessed the service quality of internet at Skyband Corporation Limited (LTD). By service quality, it entails reaching a clear, customer-related specification of goods and services then designing systems that consistently deliver to that particular specification (Colin et al, 1992). Zhao et al defines service quality as service differentiation and performance assurance for internet applications. The service differentiation provides different services to different applications according to their requirements.

Internet service in Malawi is regulated by the Communications Act of Parliament 1998 under the umbrella of Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) which is empowered to licence and oversee all activities to do with internet services among others. Internet services as a business in Malawi started in the early 2000. Then, most of the internet service providers were using very small aperture terminal (VSAT) antennas for their broadband data transmission services until the introduction of the fibre optic network. To set up a VSAT, an application has to be made to MACRA which allocates frequencies to a particular VSAT and an annual licence fee is charged for its operation. Same as setting up the fibre optic connection, approval have to be provided by MACRA and City Assembly if it is an underground fibre which will involve digging the ground for the passage of fibre cables. If it is an overhead fibre, still

approvals have to be provided by all the concerned parties. Unfortunately, MACRA do not have a mechanism of monitoring the internet transmission services from ISP companies to their customers yet in Malawi.

There are a number of players in the internet service market, providing competition to Skyband Corporation Ltd. Much as Skyband branded itself to be the “Leading Internet Service Provider (ISP) in Malawi”, competition has grown over time. There are a number of companies that have come into existence with innovative internet services. These include:- Globe Internet Solutions Ltd, Malawi Telecommunications Ltd, Broadband Internet Ltd, Malawi Net, Airtel Ltd, Telecom Networks Malawi and others.

Previously known as Africa Online, Skyband Corporation Ltd registered as a limited company in 2004. Starting as a small company within a market that knew little about ISP business, it proved difficult to penetrate and claim a sizable market share. With the passing of time, Skyband has grown and its internet services are available throughout the country. Malawi, now, knows the importance of being connected to fast and reliable internet to which Skyband claims a good market share comprising of government departments, private firms and individuals.

Setting up internet transmission equipment and maintenance coupled with licensing fees require huge investments. As a result of stiff competition most ISP companies have resorted to making alternative business decisions on acquisition and shareholding expansions. Currently, Skyband Corporation Ltd has had its share of this transformational business decision. The company sold a hundred percent shareholding to a new investor, Comzint of Switzerland which invested huge sums of money in an expansion program to improve the

network coverage. Comzint is present in a number of countries in Africa, like, South Africa, Mozambique, Zambia, Kenya, just to mention a few.

Skyband internet service products are segmented into two categories. These are consumer products and business products. Under consumer products, the target market is individual clients. In essence, it is a suitable service for home or individual office use. Under this segment, there is what is termed EVO 4G routers with the following products:-

- EVO 4G Contract, where a router is connected to the electricity power supply and the user signs a contract to be billed monthly for the data used upon paying the installation and equipment fee.
- EVO 4G pay as you go, a service in which upon paying a fee for the router, data is replenished according to usage and need.
- EVO 4G nightrider service in which a customer pays money for purchasing the router and buys data of which during the day, data usage is billable but night usage is free.

Skyband also uses data scratch cards mainly with hotel customers whereby, an VSAT antenna is mounted for the internet signal access then customers buy the scratch cards with a pin code that gives the user access to internet regardless of whether one has an internet account with Skyband or not.

The Business products are mostly meant for business operations. In this package, customers buy bandwidth according to the number of people sharing the connection and billing is done monthly on contractual agreement. Some of these business/corporate customers have service level agreements (SLA)

depending on the type of business and risks involved in Skyband committing itself to a particular SLA. Other services include:-

- Webhosting - in this service, a customer has a website that is hosted at Skyband servers. A customer can choose to update their own website or ask Skyband to do updates at a fee.
- Public Internet protocol (IP) addresses where a customer uses Skyband internet services to access his mail or other services remotely.
- Virtual private network (VPN) – This is for companies with a number of subsidiaries locally distributed across Malawi but wanting to access their information from their servers locally without going through an internet service provider making it cheaper for them.
- Multi-protocol Label Switching (MPLS) - which is preferred by many multinational organisations. Where a server is installed at Skyband to serve an international customer who has a subsidiary company locally in Malawi. By going through the server at Skyband to access information, internet charges are cheaper than it were accessing the server internationally from their mother company.

So far the EVO 4G has proved to be the fastest selling with high reliability level of internet speed. This has replaced what used to be called Skyband hotspots it allows multiple wireless entries to one account, meaning for a household, the family members can login using the same account details thereby using the same access code. Its usage has grown in popularity because even smart phones are accessing the same network signal thereby becoming more user friendly to the customers using the service.

There are a number of models that are available for the assessment of service quality. But for the sake of this research, the SERVQUAL model that has been widely used to assess service quality against customer satisfaction will be used (Tenner and Detorro, 1992; Zeithaml et al, 1988).

Customer care problems have proved a challenge to Skyband. This has left customers dissatisfied with the services. Collins et al, (1992) states that dissatisfied customers tend to be more disruptive and therefore expensive to look after. Some customers have switched to alternative internet providers while others have threatened to go in search of good quality and prompt services to enable them operate their business without interruptions.

Skyband Corporation Ltd introduced a customer call centre service, since 2012, operating twenty four hours, seven days a week established to serve customers better. This was as a result of numerous complaints from customers on their inability to access technical support services when they have problems with their internet connection or while wanting some data top-up both during and after working hours. Even after the introduction of the customer call centre, it has proved a challenge to meet the customer's satisfactory level, complaints are still coming in for the same reasons. This according to staff members is attributed to management's lack of cohesion and shared purpose with the organisation as a whole. If Skyband achieves to work in unison and have a shared strategy that is bought in by all the employees as expressed by (Knowles, 2011) in Hoshin Kanri and Catchball models of strategy deployment that creates buy in of the organisations strategies, it would achieve full satisfaction of customer expectation of service quality.

1.2 Problem Statement

There has been a general outcry from the customers, with two out of every ten customers calling in complaining on the quality of the services provided by Skyband. It is mostly difficult to get through to Skyband to present problems being encountered while surfing on the internet through telephone. It has been reported that even if one manages to get through, he is held on the phone for a long time before being assisted. At times the internet speed is slow and customer's data lapses before doing the intended thing, sometimes there are interruptions (downtime) in the service. Other customers have complained of buying scratch cards at hotels but failing to login from their point of access and no explanation is given for that. Others have complained of higher prices charged to access Skyband internet services.

1.3 Aim of the study

The study aimed at assessing the management of service quality of internet services provided by Skyband Corporation Ltd. The assessment focused on the evaluation of the quality of service provided to customers and analysis of the response to customer complaints to determine customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the services offered.

1.4 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were:-

1. To analyse delivery of internet services in order to determine levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction using the SERVQUAL model.
2. To analyse the processes that are in place to enhance quality of service and best practices.
3. To identify bottlenecks to the provision of quality services.

4. To identify strategies on improving quality of service.
5. To provide a recommended framework on management of service quality.

1.5 Problem Questions

- How is the general response to customer complaints on the service being managed?
- What knowledge exists for provision of support for quality services to customer?
- What are the factors that negatively affect the provision of quality services?
- Are the customers given adequate after sales support to operate their internet connections effectively and efficiently?
- How can the provision of good quality services be perfected in order to continuously satisfy customers?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study will help in changing some of the internal processes to suite the dynamics of the type of business and serve customers better, it helped reveal the gaps in the service delivery and provide solutions for covering the gaps thereby bringing customer satisfaction that will translate to business growth by maintaining existing customers and bringing on board new customers.

With a framework on the management of service quality proposed and if fully adopted, it will be used as a standard way of carrying out daily operations in the provision of uninterrupted internet services. If needed, other Internet service providers could borrow ideas from the same and apply to their daily operations as they strive to serve customers better.

1.7 Scope of the study

The study concentrated on Skyband Corporation Ltd as a chosen case study. At this organisation, specific attention was on the core customer care sections, which included the IT section, the marketing section and the customer call centre. This was because these are the sections that are providing IT customer support services thereby being the ones to provide the necessary information for the study.

1.8 Study Limitations

The research is out of the originally planned schedule. The reasons being that:-

- It took time for the management of Skyband Corporation Limited to give authorisation to start carrying out the research. Despite numerous reminders, it took close to a month after the questionnaires were approved by supervisors to be granted access to the needed information to start the study. This has delayed the delivery period from the initially planned schedule, refer to appendix 1.

- It was difficult to collect data on time both from staff members and customers. Some staff members never responded to the questionnaire until the time this report was being prepared. They claimed to be too busy to find time to respond. Despite numerous reminders to respond to the questionnaires, some did not return the completed questionnaires until the report writing. They promised to email back the completed questionnaire every time a call was made but to no avail. This affected the quality of information provided since some respondents completed the questionnaires just to get done with the phone call reminders or they responded in haste thereby not having enough time to give adequate information.

Despite the challenges faced, finally the results are presented herein.

1.9 Study Report

The dissertation has five chapters organised as follows:-

- Chapter one has the introduction, aim of the study, specific objectives, problem questions, study report.
- Chapter two has the literature review.
- Chapter three has the research methodology.
- Chapter four has data analysis and discussions.
- Chapter five has summary of findings, recommendations, conclusion, appendices and bibliography.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, previous writings on service quality were analysed to support the topic with study material and to build on previous research to come up with the reason behind the research and unearthing the gaps in research that have been there in the area of service quality.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework centres around five elements namely:- reliability, assurance, tangibility empathy and responsiveness. The perception is that if a service meets all the five dimensions, that service is regarded a quality service and with good complaints management and affordable price for the service, the result is customer satisfaction which will bring in effective commitment, culculated commitment and good company image resulting in customer loyalty thereby creating a competitive advantage emanating from customer satisfaction.

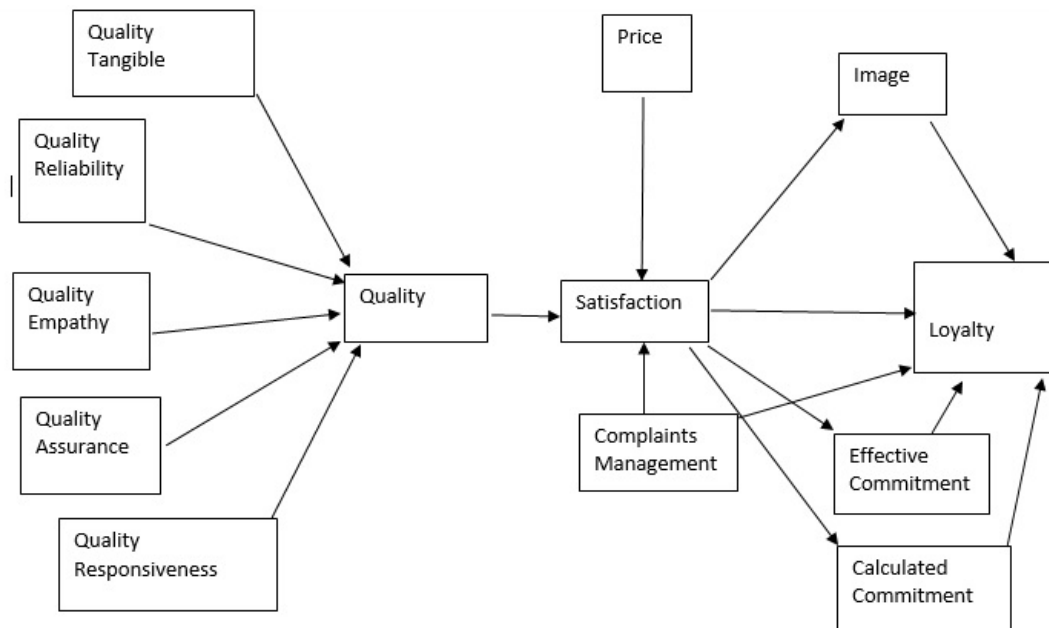


Figure 1 - Conceptual Framework

2.2 Service Quality Measurement

Researchers have for decades, been studying service quality and its relationship to critical business outcomes. To this far, numerous studies have addressed the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction and it is mostly believed that higher levels of service quality results to higher levels of customer satisfaction (Gotlieb *et al.* , 1994; Kang and James, 2004; Oliver, 1997). The model most commonly used in measuring service quality is SERVQUAL developed by (Parasuraman et al, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1991 1994). There are five elements in the measurement of customer satisfaction that were streamlined by Tenner and Detorro, (1992) acronymed RATER standing for reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness as mentioned above. Upon assessment of these elements, it is perceived that customer satisfaction will be measured and organisations will be in a position to detect if at all a service has some in deviation in meeting customer satisfaction and make the necessary adjustments to ensure satisfaction. These elements measures in detail the following service perception from the customer:-

Reliability: ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.

Assurance: the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence.

Tangibility: The physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel.

Empathy: The caring, individualized attention, and appearance of personnel.

Responsiveness: The willingness of members of staff to help customers and provide prompt service.

SERVQUAL model measures the expectations of the customers on service quality before a service encounter and their perception after the actual service encounter. (Parasuraman et al, 1985; Curry, 1999; Luke et al, 2002). The Gap model developed after SERVQUAL model by (Parasuraman et al, 1985)

identifies seven key discrepancies (gaps) in relation to management perception of service quality and tasks associated with service delivery to customers.

The model is an extension of Parasuraman et al, (1985). According to the following explanation (ASI, 1992; Curry, 1999; Luke et al, 2002), the two important gaps, which are more associated with the external customers, are Gap1 and Gap5 since they have a direct relationship with customers.

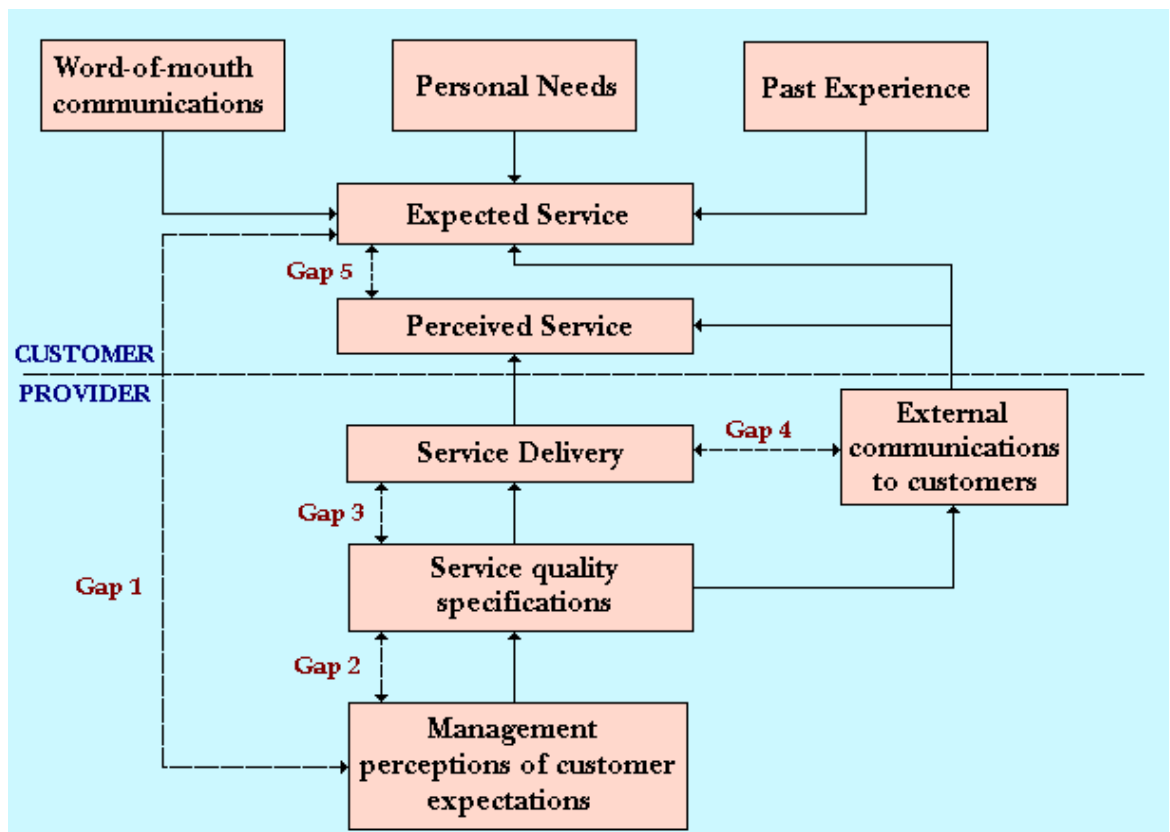


Figure 2 - Adopted from Parasuraman, (1985)

Gap1: Customers expectations versus management perceptions: as a result of the lack of a marketing research orientation, inadequate upward communication and too many layers of management.

Gap2: Management perceptions versus service specifications: as a result of inadequate commitment to service quality, a perception of unfeasibility, inadequate task standardisation and an absence of proper goal setting.

Gap3: Service specifications versus service delivery: as a result of role ambiguity and conflict, poor employee and poor technology, inappropriate supervisory control systems, lack of perceived control and lack of teamwork.

Gap4: Service delivery versus external communication: as a result of inadequate horizontal communications and propensity to over promise.

Gap5: The gap between customer expectations and their perception of the service delivered as a result of the influences exerted from the customer side and the shortfalls on the part of the service provider. In this case, customer expectations are influenced by the extent of personal needs, word of mouth recommendation and past service experiences, (Parasuraman et al, 1994).

Upon a good analysis of the SERVQUAL model and the Gap analysis fulfilment of the management shortfalls, a customer is assured of receiving quality service as expected thereby achieving satisfaction. No evidence was found indicating that, when compared to the situation in which performance is perceived to be adequate, the relationship between quality and satisfaction is different when perceived performance is above the desired service level, (Teas and DeCarlo, 2004). This might require further research.

2.3 Quality

Quality is a totality of features and characteristics that bear on the ability of a product or service to satisfy a given need (Crosby, 1979). Defoe et al, (2010) defines quality as fitness for purpose. Quality is defined by the customer and as such will change over time often in unpredictable ways and quality is associated with creating customer value (Goetsch et al, 2010). Assessing service quality at Skyband will create customer value revealing the gaps that are there in service delivery thereby finding ways to bridge the gaps.

According to (Knowles, 2011), the customer focus on quality is aimed at creating value for customers with a need to become obsessive about understanding customer's requirements and expectations. The idea of producing quality products to accomplish good customer service emphasizes on becoming customer focused and adhering to conditions that will change internal and external processes of an organisation in order to create customer satisfaction that will create a competitive advantage to an organisation (Skyband) in the ISP business sector.

2.4 Service Quality

Service quality has received wide spread discussion because of its perceived linkage to customer satisfaction and the difficulty it presents to define it in its entirety. It has received much attention by academicians and practitioners (Negi, 2009). Parasuraman et al (1985) has defined service quality as "the discrepancy between customer's perceptions of the service offered by a particular firm and their expectation about the firms offering such services". The issue of service quality being a result of perception is concurred with by Zeithaml et al, (2003) "Service quality is a focused evaluation that reflects the customer's perception of specific dimensions of service: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, tangibles. Satisfaction, on the other hand, is more inclusive: it is influenced by perceptions of service quality, product quality, and price as well as situational factors and personal factors". Other dimensions of service quality impinges on perception, if a customer receives what is perceived as low quality then service quality is low and if the quality is high the perception is, the service quality is high. Service quality is difficult to measure because of its intangible nature and the fact that it deals with expectations and perceptions which involve human feelings which are unpredictable because of the complexity of the human nature. It is considered an important tool for a firm's struggle to create an edge between itself and its

competitors (Ladhari, 2008), a position that Skyband Corporation Ltd is striving to achieve.

Emstad, (2004) introduces other dimensions of service quality as being perceived by the users as a combination of factors that relates to user expectation and satisfaction. It addresses quantifiable technical qualities and solutions, but other aspects such as billing and service management are not included. User or source, network behaviour and interaction in a broad sense are determining factors. Measuring quality of service performance in an appropriate way has received widespread attention due to the vital role customer service plays in gaining competitive advantage. Since performance of customer service directly correlates with customer satisfaction, measuring service performance that attempts to assess validity is a major concern for many firms (Yang et al, 2000). The users' perception of telecommunications' network infrastructure quality of service provision is critical to a successful business management operation of any information technology (IT) based organization (Babulak, 2004). Skyband understands the importance of investing in differentiating its infrastructure set up system in order to continue offering a business with highest specialty of services to create a big gap between itself and its competition.

The best service quality is determined by the reliability of performance (Feigenbaum, 1961). Quality is the total composition of product and service characteristics of marketing, engineering, maintenance and manufacturing through which customer expectations are met. Burnes, (2002) describes quality of internet service as accessibility of an organisation's website by the online viewers, it is explained that an organisation whose website is difficult to access weakens its position on the market. This resonates well with Skyband's reason for existence, provision of reliable internet, which would give viewers a good view of their website by touch of button. But what happens when a customer is

unable to access their website as fast as is expected. This is the reason the service quality Skyband is offering has to be assessed in order to ascertain its reliability to offer quality services to its customers.

According to Lobo and Prentice, (2014), ISP service quality is influenced by the following four dimensions: network quality, customer service and technical support, information quality, security and privacy. His findings reveal that while all dimensions have positive effects on trust, only network quality, information support and privacy influence customer value significantly and information support is the only dimension which is directly related to commitment.

Perceived service quality is a combination of the overall support delivered by the internet service provider, (Delone and Mclean, 2003; Lin, 2007; Shih, 2004). Many researchers have identified service quality as an important factor of information system success (Kettinger and Lee, 1995; Pitt et al, 1995); most service companies have research programs designed to measure service quality, and/or customer satisfaction, and/or relationship quality. Such programs are designed to allow management to manage service quality provision and relationship building initiatives that cements the relationship between an organisation and its customers. They provide important information in guiding efforts to reduce variability in service quality and to provide customers with the service that will help ensure their continued patronage. While there is little direct evidence to the link between service quality and better company performance, there is positive correlation between higher market share and improved profitability.

One most important aspect of the whole discussion hinges of customer satisfaction. This proves that, there is positive correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction and in order to measure service quality, there is need to taste the levels of satisfaction in customers.

2.5 Total Quality Management (TQM)

Total Quality Management (TQM) is an organization wide approach to continuously improving the quality of all the organization's processes, products and services (Kotler, 2006). Asher, (1996) defines Total Quality Management as the continuous improvement of individuals, groups, departments, processes and organisations focused on meeting customer's requirements. The efforts of TQM had gone towards getting things right at first time, often at the expense of the wider service offering. An analysis of complaints in many larger organisations revealed that oftentimes customers are to a large extent happy with basic product or service but experience difficulties with other ancillary services such as delivery, invoicing, packaging, customer contact. These areas had been neglected and management concentrated on production areas only to reduce costs (Asher, 1996). TQM is about organisational change with focus on both internal and external customers. TQM is about changing the way things are done by perfecting the procedures with focus on delivery of good quality services to customers. TQM has four stages which are:- establishing a need to change, Gaining and sustaining commitment, implementation of the change and review. It is imperative for an Skyband to be committed towards TQM and to apply this process in an iterative way in order to create a self-assessment of the organisation's processes thereby perfecting the service quality delivered to customers and provide continued customer satisfaction which would result in brand royalty.

2.6 Customer Care Management

Customer care management is the activities of looking after customers, and helping them with their complaints or problems with an aim of bringing customer satisfaction. Customer service is at the heart of service quality management of the Internet services, customers are the reason the ISP providers exist in business, it is imperative to provide special attention to customer needs

because not only are they satisfied by the services provided, but they as well recommend the business to would be customers (Friedmann, 2013). A new phenomenon is brought in here of recommending the service to would be customers that would bring business growth. A good customer service provider should be a good listener, able to provide solutions to client's problems and fast in diagnosing client's problems (Leung, 2014). Customers are always satisfied with services that respond to their needs positively, and services that provide solutions to their problems promptly.

Measuring service quality and satisfaction traditionally involves asking customers subjective questions, thus, asking if they personally felt the service they received was satisfactory. Knowledge of the products offered and how it operates is key to good customer care. Convincing customers to develop loyalty to the brand is key role of good customer service management. If customers develop brand loyalty it is easy to sell other products that the organisation put on the market. This has been evidenced by the growth in business that Skyband has managed to achieve from starting as a small company to having subsidiaries in the three regions of Malawi. This was achieved through creation of brand loyalty in its customers thereafter introducing other products to them.

2.7 Customer Satisfaction

When customers are dissatisfied with handling of their complaints, they tell nine to ten people. On the other hand, customers satisfied with handling of their complaints tell four or five people (Ruben et al, 1985). Proving how important it is to please customers with good quality services to avoid denting the organisation's image. Customer satisfaction may be viewed as either transactional or cumulative. It is transactional-specific where customer satisfaction is based on a one time, specific post purchase evaluation

judgement of a service encounter (Oliver, 1980, 1997). Conversely, it is cumulative where it involves an overall customer evaluation of a product or a service consumption experiences over time (Fornell, 1992). Complaints may arise as a result of defective or poor product or service quality, unfulfilled expectations in the service encounter, or some unfulfilled promises given by service provider. Customers may complain about some attributes of a product or dimension of service quality that is perceived as dissatisfactory but as they complain, they have the right to be listened to and be assisted promptly to avoid losing them to a competitor (Nimako et al, 2014).

Customer satisfaction has to receive keen interest because of its influence on repeat purchase and expected recommendation to would be customers upon satisfaction. In general terms customer satisfaction is seen as a main determinant of the organisation's success (Burch et al, 1995). Several studies have been cited by Nauman, (1995) that explains that it costs an organisation five times as much in terms of its resources to get a new customer than it costs to keep an existing customer. Satisfaction reinforces an attitude on repeat buy while dissatisfaction lessens the attitude on the same (Assael, 1987). Often times when Skyband customers decide to go to a competitor for other reasons, they have ended up coming back due to differentiations in customer services.

2.8 Effects of outage (downtime)

Network outage happens due to maintenance of the transmission line or failure of network components to operate. It is imperative to have a backup link that would provide services while efforts are being made to restore the normal transmission. This is important because the reason ISP services operate is to provide uninterruptible broadband services to the customers. In most cases, these operator services sign service level agreements (SLA) on the provision of quality uninterruptible services (Kalmanek, 2010). Failure to have a reliable

backup transmission link would mean loss of business and damage to the reputation of the organisation, this would expose the organisation to unnecessary competition on the market. If not taken with careful consideration, it could in the longer term easily drive the organisation out of business as customers switch to competitors for better services.

The response to downtime will depend on the staff competency levels. Employees in the ISP business sector are to be highly competent in their area of expertise because of the dynamism of the business they transact in. Resource allocation for training has to be high in order to remain competitive in business (Knowles, 2011). Skyband has been struggling in organising formal trainings for its members of staff which is one of the most important areas in the ISP business that will set it apart from its competitors.

2.9 Competency levels of employees

Competence is defined as the ability of an organisation to sustain coordinated deployments of resources in ways that promise to help that particular organisation achieve its goals, (Heene et al, 2001). Keerthy et al, (2014), describe competency as components of a job, reflected in behaviour that is observable in a workplace. In an organization, human resource departments use competence descriptions to layout requirements needed for performing specific tasks or jobs. According to Timothy, Athey and Michael (2004), a competency is a set of observable performance dimensions including individual knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour as well as collective teams, processes and organizational capabilities that are linked to high performance and provide the organization with sustainable competitive advantage. In dynamic environments, building and leveraging competences require flexibility in acquiring and deploying new resources effectively in changing circumstances. Thus, in dynamic environments, creating higher capabilities like organisational learning that improves performance and flexibility of an

organisation becomes critical to building, leveraging and maintaining competences. Competence based competition in its dynamic forms may therefore be likened to a perpetual corporate entrepreneurialism in which continuous learning is employed on how to build new leverage based on competence, (Sanchez, 2001). For Skyband to have competitive edge over other internet service providers it has to build competences in its members of staff for better customer service provision.

Employees' competency levels are measured by levels of proficiency against the competency level (Edwards, 2011). Institutions seeking to maintain control in the market and secure their position for the future must ensure that the skills and efforts of employees are directed towards achieving the goals of the organization as a whole. In this way, employees become a critical source for competitiveness that will sustain itself over time, Keerthy et al, (2014). In this regard, an organisation's employee's competency levels are to match the direction of business that an organisation is taking. Since competencies are acquired through training and many other ways, therefore it will be necessary for organisations like Skyband to periodically conduct an audit on training needs and train their staff to match internet industry developments. This will enable them to have the right competencies to enable it maintain a foothold in business.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research philosophy, approach to the study, sampling technique, data collection method and analysis in reference to the study topic.

3.1 Research Philosophy

The methodology for carrying out this research followed an interpretivist philosophy. The justification for this choice was that the researcher collected and analysed the data and formed an opinion from the information.

3.2 Approach

The approach was both quantitative and qualitative research. The study required quantitative data interpretation though it encompassed a small sample of population and also the customer perception (qualitative) of the quality of service being offered.

3.3 Strategy

Case study strategy was the one chosen for this project. The justification being that one organisation in a pool of ISP companies was chosen as a study centre. If needed, the report could be used by other ISPs to learn from, much as the idea is to enhance competitive advantage for Skyband in the ISP business sector.

3.4 Sampling technique

Sampling for data collection technique followed random sampling structure and it followed a purposive technique as it gathered data for interpretation on the precise questions asked and its target was mainly to accomplish the research objectives while being cost effective (Kumar, 2011).

3.5 Sample plan

Target Group	Estimated number	Sample selected	Technique used
Top Management	4	1	Interview
Technicians	10	5	Interview
Call center supervisors	3	3	Interview
Corporate/business Customers	200	20	Questionnaires
Individual/consumer customers	200	20	Questionnaires
Customers in the Call center data base	500	50	Reports analysis
TOTAL NUMBER	907	99	

Table 1 - Sample Plan

3.6 Data collection method

3.6.1 Primary data

The primary research involved interviews through questionnaires administered to a sample of customers and staff members. The questionnaires to customers were sent through emails and followed up by phone calls. Face to face interviews were conducted to members of staff to triangulate the results thereby ensure validity and increase credibility of the results from staff members.

3.6.2 Secondary Data

The secondary research involved a review of Skyband customer call center reports and other relevant documents. This gave a chance to get appropriate and up to date information for the study. Coupled with the primary research done, the results reflect the true picture of the service quality of internet at Skyband.

3.7 Questionnaire Testing

Upon preparation of the questionnaire, the first step was to test it to a sampled pilot study group. It transpired that some questions were not clear to the respondents and some required to be extrapolated in order to get clear answers and give chance to respondents to express their views further. A revision to the questions was done to get the envisioned results.

3.8 Data Analysis

In quantitative data analysis, SPSS was used to come up with information that presented results of the research, interpretation of this information is discussed thereafter. In qualitative data analysis, data collected was grouped into themes

that emanated from the specific objectives of the study and the model of measurement of service quality (SERVQUAL) that is being used. It should be noted that qualitative data mostly presented perception of interviewees on various questions that were asked, thereafter, this was triangulated with the quantitative data. Opinion is drawn, then conclusion based on the discussion.

In the next chapter, data analysis will be presented based on the collected data through both primary and secondary research.

CHAPTER FOUR – DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, data that was collected is analyzed and presented as information. This will add meaning to the discussion that has been on going in the previous chapters.

4.1 Demography of respondents

4.1.1 Customers

A total of forty questionnaires were sent to customers randomly selected from a chosen sample of customers. The customers were divided into two separate categories based on their internet subscription requirements thus consumer products meant for individual clients and business products meant for business/corporate clients. Fifteen consumer product clients out of twenty that received the questionnaires and sixteen business clients out of twenty that received questionnaires responded. In total, thirty one customer respondents responded to the questionnaires out of the forty who received the questionnaires representing a 77.5 percent respondent rate. Reminders were sent through phone calls to the respondents. Only a few responded without being reminded but most of them had to be called several times in order for them to email back the completed questionnaire.

4.1.2 Staff

The staff respondents were originally meant to be nine in total according to the initial sample plan. Two technicians and one call centre supervisor did not respond to the questionnaires despite several reminders. They complained of having no time at all. Efforts to get a chance to interview them failed because of their busy work schedules. Interviews were only done to six members of staff

representing 66.6 percent response rate. It is believed that the opinion presented from these members of staff from the targeted sections, represents the overall view of Skyband Corporation on service quality of internet.

4.1.3 Gender of respondents

Table 2: Respondents gender

Details	Male	Female	Total	Total sample percentage
Customers	23	8	31	77.5%
Staff	6	0	6	66.6%
Total	29	8	37	75.5%

Respondents Gender

There were twenty three male customer respondents and eight female customer respondents. Initially, the choice of respondent for both Corporate and Individual customers was based on the one overseeing the internet connection in that particular organization and it mostly turned out to be the head of Information Technology (IT) department for corporate clients. For the individual clients, anybody overseeing the management of internet whether IT based or in some cases accountants or administration managers even individual users were respondents.

The staff respondents comes from the chosen groups of respondents namely, one top executive, three technicians and two call centre supervisors making a total of six.

The fact that there were more male respondents than females was just a coincidence. In total, the percentage respondent rate for both customers and staff was 75.5.

4.1.4 Age group

The respondents age groups were as detailed below:-

Table 3: Respondents Age

Details	customers	staff	total	percentage
20-30	6	3	9	24.32
31-40	17	2	19	51.35
41-50	6	1	7	18.92
51-60	2	0	2	5.4
Total	31	6	37	100

Respondents Age, Source: Field study, January 2015

Between the ages of 20-30 there was 24.32 percentage respondent rate, between the ages of 31-40 there was 51.35 percentage respondent rate, between 41-50 there was 18.92 percentage respondent rate and between 51-60 the respondent rate was 5.4 percent.

The respondent rate was higher between the ages of 31-40 years. This shows that there is a higher number of employees in this age category, giving their opinion to the study.

4.1.5 Number of years with Skyband

This represents the number of years that both customer and staff has spent with Skyband either using Skyband internet service or serving as an employee.

Table 4: Respondents number of years with Skyband

Detail	Customer	staff	Total	Percentage
0-2	6	4	10	27.03
3-4	7	0	7	18.92
5-6	4	1	5	13.51
7-8	9	1	10	27.03
>8	4	0	4	10.81
missing	1	-	1	2.7
Total	31	6	37	100

Respondents number of years with Skyband, Source: Field study, January 2015

There was a higher rate of percentage of 27.03 in the segment of customers and staff that have spent 0-2 years with Skyband, the same amount of percentage rate is repeated in the segment of those that have spent 7-8 years with Skyband followed by the ones spending 3-4 years with 18.92 percent, then 5-6 years with Skyband with a rate of 13.51 percent. Those that have spent more than 8 years with Skyband had a 10.81 percent.

From the above results, the assumption is, the higher the number of years with Skyband the more credible the information that can be given on the perception of the service Skyband is offering and the same with staff, The staff respondents will be able to provide more information after staying for a long time.

4.1.6 Level of education

From the list of respondents below, a presentation of the level education of respondents is presented:-

Table 5: Respondents level of education

Level of Education	customers	staff	total	percentage
University Education	25	3	28	75.68
Diploma Holder	6	3	9	24.32
Total	31	6	37	100

Respondents level of education, Source: Field study, January 2015

Those with university education were 28 out of 37, representing a 75.68 percent and with diplomas were 9 out of the 37, representing 24.32 percent.

The higher the education level the better the understanding of the requirements of the research and better articulation of issues involved.

4.2 Analysis of service quality measurement themes for customer respondents

Entries in the template were coded as presented in the Likert scale below. This was used as a standard mode of answering part one of the questionnaire. The second part was qualitative in nature. Customers were given a chance to express themselves on their perception of the service Skyband is offering and their discussions are as presented in the chosen themes below:-

Strongly agree – 1

Agree – 2

Uncertain – 3

Disagree – 4

Strongly disagree – 5

4.2.1 Tangibility dimension

Tangibility dimension represents appearance of the physical environment, the physicality of service, equipment, personnel and communication systems.

The table below shows the frequency and corresponding percentage on how many customers responded to an assessment questions on tangibility of the service quality that Skyband Corporation Ltd internet provides.

Table 6: Tangibility dimension measurement for customers

Detail	Strongly agree	agree	uncertain	disagree	Strongly disagree
Easy to get through phone to present complaints	13 (41.9%)	13 (41.9%)	2 (6.5%)	2 (6.5%)	1(3.2%)
Skyband has personalized services	7 (22.6%)	18 (58.1%)	5 (16.1%)	1 (3.2%)	-
Email response is quick	13 (41.9%)	13 (41.9%)	2 (6.5%)	2 (6.5%)	1 (3.2%)

Tangibility dimension measurement for customers, Source: Field study, January 2015

The questions were based on the physicality of service, equipment, personnel and communication system. From the information above, 13 respondents out of 31 representing 41.9% strongly agree that it is easy to get through to Skyband by phone. 13 out of 31 respondents again, agree to the same representing 41.9% while two respondents out of 31 representing 6.5% were uncertain and 2 respondents out of 31 representing 6.5% disagree to this question 1 respondent out of 31 representing 3.2% strongly agree to the same question.

From the analysis above, conclusion can be drawn that skyband's ease of access through phone is high at 83.8percent in agreement with the statement.

Seven respondents out of 31 representing 22.6 percent strongly agree that Skyband has personalized services, while 18 respondents out of 31

representing 58.1percent agree to the same question, 5 respondents out of 31 representing 16.1percent were uncertain that the services offered by Skyband are personalized while 1 respondent representing 3.2 percent disagree to the same. This means 80.7 percent are in agreement that the services at Skyband are personalized.

From the information above, 13 respondents out of 31 representing 41.9% strongly agree that Skyband responds to emails faster. 13 out of 31 respondents again, agree to the same representing 41.9% while two respondents out of 31 representing 6.5% were uncertain and 2 respondents out of 31 representing 6.5% disagree to this question 1 respondent out of 31 representing 3.2% strongly agree to the same question. This translates to 83.9 percent agreeing that Skyband responds to emails faster.

From the presentation above on the tangibility measurement of service quality, a conclusion can be drawn that most respondents are in agreement that the tangibility dimension of service quality is satisfactory with 83.8 percent in agreement on the easiness to get through phone and 83.8 percent agreeing that email response is quick. 80.7 percent score in the other question that the services at Skyband are personalized. Those that scored uncertain or in disagreement or strongly disagreeing to the tangibility measurement dimension are less than those that score in agreement thereby rendering the tangibility dimension satisfactory.

Teething issues from the qualitative discussion

From qualitative data, where some questions required an open discussion rather than the closed answer as in the above analysis, the following issues were raised by customer respondents:-

- about ten customers complained that Skyband is obsessed with trying to solve almost every problem through a phone conversation. They pointed out that customers need physical presence of technical personnel at their

premises to appreciate the problems they are facing and physically solve the problems.

- A suggestion came up that Skyband should be having constant updates of products provided on their website and that Skyband should emphasize on selling consumer products since most ISP's are not venturing in this field because of the competition from mobile phone internet.
- five respondents expressed that Skyband responds faster to emails than phone calls. This shows that Skyband delays in dealing with complaints provided through telephone calls consequently there is need to improve on telephone etiquette to serve customers better. Though customers commend Skyband marketing team's provision of services.
- When asked about prices they pay to access Skyband internet, all respondents said they were not worried with the price as long as the service is worthwhile. They said it becomes a problem when the service has some interruptions or when it is slow or when customer call centre do not provide adequate support, then the price paid is a cause for concern

Skyband to improve on the tangibility dimension of service quality mainly on the points raised above to perfect the service.

4.2.2 Reliability dimension

Reliability dimension covers the ability of the company to provide services on time, willingness in solving customer problems, accuracy of customer records

and customer satisfaction with the services provided. The following table presents frequencies and corresponding percentages in the questions asked:-

Table 7: Reliability dimension measurement for customers

Detail	Strongly agree	agree	uncertain	disagree	Strongly disagree
Skyband records one outage within a space of three months	2 (6.5%)	11(35.5%)	12 (38.7%)	3 (9.7%)	2 (6.5%)
Employees are always willing to assist customers	10(32.3%)	17(54.8%)	2 (6.5%)	2 (6.5%)	-
Are customers satisfied with response they get from Skyband	4 (12.9%)	16 (51.6%)	-	4 (12.9%)	6 (19.4)
Flexible in dealing with customers.	7 (22.6%)	16 (51.6%)	5 (16.1%)	2 (6.5%)	1 (3.2%)

Reliability dimension measurement for customers, Source: Field study, January 2015

The reliability dimension of service quality offered by Skyband is presenting the above information analyzed as follows:- 12 respondents out of 31, representing 38.7 percent are uncertain that Skyband internet records one outage within a space of three months while 3 respondents out of 31, representing 9.7 percent

disagree to the same statement and 2 respondents, representing 6.5 percent strongly disagrees to this. 2 respondents out of 31 representing 6.5 percent strongly agree that Skyband records one outage within a space of three months while 11 respondents out of 31 representing 35.5 percent agree to the same. From this analysis, 17 respondents out of 31 representing 54.8 percent are on the negative side, in other words they say Skyband records more than one outage within a space of three months while 13 respondents out of 31 representing 41.9 percent agree to that Skyband records one outage within a space of three months. This analysis means that Skyband internet has more than one downtime in a space of three months because the higher percentage of 54.8 percent is in disagreement with the statement against the lower percentage of 41.9 percent in agreement with the statement.

10 respondents out of 31, representing 32.3 percent strongly agree that Skyband employees are always willing to assist customers while 17 respondents representing 54.8 percent agree to the same statement. 2 respondents representing 6.5 percent are uncertain and 2 respondents, representing 6.5 percent disagrees that Skyband employees are willing to assist customers. In this analysis 87.1 percent are in agreement that Skyband employees are always willing to assist customers, which means Skyband employees assist customers.

4 respondents out of 31 representing 12.9 percent strongly agrees that they are satisfied with the response they get from Skyband and 16 respondents out of 31 representing 51.6 percent agrees that they are satisfied with the response received, 4 respondents out of 31, representing 12.9 percent disagrees with the same statement and 6 respondents out of 31 representing 19.4 percent strongly disagrees to the same. This translates that 64.5 percent are in agreement that they get a good response from Skyband against 53.5 percent on the negative.

7 respondents out of 31, representing 22.6 percent strongly agree that Skyband employees are flexible in dealing with customers while 16 respondents out of 31, representing 51.6 percent agree to the same statement. 5 respondents out of 31, representing 16.1 percent are uncertain on whether Skyband employees are flexible in dealing with customers while 2 respondents out of 31 representing 6.5 percent disagrees and 1 respondent representing 3.2 percent strongly disagrees to the same. From this question the majority of 23 respondents representing 74.2 percent are on the positive side against 8 which is 25.8 percent on the negative.

From the analysis above, the reliability dimension of service quality has three questions with one scoring 87.1percent, another one scoring 64.5 percent and the other one 74.2 percent all in agreement that the service is reliable with one question having a negative majority response of 54.9 percent. A conclusion then can be drawn that the reliability service quality dimension is satisfactory based on the discussion above.

The uncertain respondents suggesting that Skyband has more than one outage within a space of three months has an extension to the answer from a number of customers that Skyband has to develop a solid and reliable backup link so that whatever happens to the fibre connections, there should always be an alternative transmission system to avoid disrupting businesses.

4.2.3 Responsive dimension

Responsive service quality dimension means willingness of the company to help its customers in providing good quality and fast service. The following table shows frequencies and corresponding percentages of questions asked to get respondents perception on this service quality dimension.

Table 8: Responsive dimension measurement for customers

Detail	Strongly agree	agree	uncertain	disagree	Strongly disagree
Skyband responds to outage within a day.	7 (22.6%)	16 (51.6%)	5 (16.1%)	2 (6.5%)	1 (3.2%)

Responsive dimension measurement for customers, Source: Field study, January 2015

From the responsive dimension of service quality, 7 respondents out of 31 representing 22.6 percent strongly agree that Skyband responds to outage within a day, 16 respondents out of 31, representing 51.6 percent agree to the same, 5 respondents, representing 16.1 percent are uncertain that Skyband responds to outage within a day and 2 respondents representing 6.5 percent disagrees to this while 1 respondent representing 3.2 percent strongly disagrees to the same statement.

From this, the majority of 74.2 percent agree with a frequency sum of 23 respondents out of 31 on the positive response and 8 respondents out of 31 on the negative. A conclusion then can be drawn that Skyband responds to outage within a day meaning that Skyband's responsive dimension of service quality is satisfactory.

From the qualitative data collected, about 5 respondents out of 31 suggested that Skyband need to employ more technical support staff to respond to their problems and that Skyband needs to train its customer call centre staff on customer care management. These two issues were taken note of as suggestions from customers.

4.2.4 Assurance dimension

Assurance being how knowledgeable and courtesy staff is and their ability to create trust in the customers while increasing confidence levels. The following table shows frequencies and percentages on how respondents answered to the question.

Table 9: Assurance dimension measurement for customers

Detail	Strongly agree	agree	uncertain	disagree	Strongly disagree
Skyband understands customers specific needs	7 (22.6%)	17 (54.8%)	4 (12.9%)	3 (9.7%)	-

Assurance dimension measurement for customers, Source: Field study, January 2015

If Skyband understands every customer's specific need, it is easy to assist every customer and assure him of good service. From the above presentation, 7 respondents out of 31, representing 22.6 percent strongly agree to the statement that Skyband understands their specific needs while 17 respondents out of 31 representing 54.8 percent agree to the same. 4 respondents out of 31 representing 12.9 percent were uncertain to the statement and three3 respondents out of 31 representing 9.7 percent disagrees that Skyband understands their specific needs.

A conclusion can be drawn then that 24 respondents out of 31 representing 77.4 percent are satisfied that Skyband understands their specific needs and that they are assured of getting satisfactory services from Skyband against 7 respondents out of 31 in disagreement with the statement.

4.2.5 Empathy dimension

Empathy is another dimension of this service quality measurement criteria that shows how Skyband feels for the customers or how it puts itself in the shoes of the customers thereby making sure that whatever problem is presented to them is sorted on time to avoid disruption of customers businesses and thereby lose business because Skyband's failure to assist on time. The following table contains frequencies and corresponding percentages on question asked to ascertain the empathetic dimension of Skyband service.

Table 10: Empathy dimension measurement for customers

Detail	Strongly agree	agree	uncertain	disagree	Strongly disagree
Has customers interest at heart	3 (9.7%)	17 (54.8%)	10 (32.3%)	-	1(3.2%)

Empathy dimension measurement for customers, Source: Field study, January 2015

3 respondents out of 31 representing 9.7 percent strongly agree while 17 respondents out of 31 representing 54.8 percent agree to that Skyband has their best interest at heart. 10 respondents out of 31 representing 32.3 percent were uncertain and 1 respondent out of 31 representing 3.2 percent strongly disagrees to the statement.

From the above, 20 respondents out of 31 representing 64.5 percent, are on the positive side which agrees that Skyband feels for the customers and that they are put first in everything. 10 respondents out of 31 representing 32.3 percent are uncertain which means that they are not sure whether Skyband feels for them or not and one respondent out of 31 is strongly in denial that Skyband feels for them. A conclusion can be drawn then that Skyband is empathetic to its customers. Which means Skyband feels for its customers.

4.3 Staff Respondents Service Quality Measurement Analysis

4.3.1 Service quality dimensions analysis

The first part of the questions after the demographic data, in the staff questionnaire required a standardized answer therefore, a Likert scale was used as listed below:-

Strongly agree – 1

Agree – 2

Uncertain – 3

Disagree – 4

Strongly disagree - 5

As the entries were being made in the template, the codes were entered as stipulated. The last part required the staff to express themselves and give their perception on how Skyband is providing a quality service to customers. As such, the interpretation follows the same trend.

The themes chosen were as in the prescribed measurement of service quality by Parasuraman et al (1994) which as well came outstanding in the concept map. The questionnaires were later triangulated through interviews with the staff members to get an in-depth understanding on their perception about the quality of service provided to customers.

4.3.2 Tangibility dimension

The following table shows frequencies and corresponding percentages on the questions asked to ascertain the tangibility dimension of service quality.

Table 11: Tangibility dimension measurement for staff

Detail	Strongly agree	agree	uncertain	disagree	Strongly disagree
Products are specifically made to provide customer satisfaction	4 (66.7%)	1(16.7%)	1(16.7%)		
Market liberalization has brought stiff competition	2 (33.3%)	2 (33.3%)	1(16.7%)	1(16.7%)	
Do employees have up to date equipment to assist customers	5 (83.3%)	1 (16.7%)			

Tangibility dimension measurement for staff, Source: Field study, January 2015

With tangibility representing appearance of the physical environment, the physicality of service, equipment, personnel and communication systems, 4 respondents out of 6 respondents representing 66.7 percent strongly agree that products are specifically made to provide customer satisfaction and one respondents out of 6 representing 16.7 percent consenting in agreement to this statement while 1 respondent out of 6 representing 16.7 percent is uncertain that the products Skyband provides are specifically made to provide customer satisfaction. This means the products are specifically made to provide customer satisfaction with a high score of 66.7 percent.

2 respondents out of 6 representing 33.3 percent strongly agree that there is high competition due to market liberalization and 2 respondent representing 33.3 percent agreeing to the same while 1 respondent out of 6 representing

16.7 percent is uncertain that there is competition due to liberalization of markets and 1 respondent out of 6 representing 16.7 percent disagreeing to the same. This means the liberalization of the market has brought competition with an agreement rate of 33.3 percent.

5 respondents out of 6 representing 83.3 percent strongly agree that they have up to date equipment to provide good service to customers and 1 out of 6 respondents representing 16.7 percent agrees to the same. Meaning the equipment at Skyband is up to date to provide good services.

From the above discussion it is evidenced that the tangibility service quality is satisfactory with 83.4 percent score on products suitably made to suite customers needs, 66.6 percent consenting that market liberalization has brought tough competition, and 100% agreeing that they have the right equipment to carry out their work. A conclusion to this is that tangibility dimension of service quality is satisfactory.

Qualitative data collection carried out, it transpired that all the six members of staff interviewed revealed that formal trainings are required in IT, call centre and sales and marketing sections. Skyband needs to be vigilant in training its staff knowing very well that ISP business is a highly dynamic business and that more staff need to be technology competent, the high the competency levels the more they will serve the customers better thereby gaining competitive advantage. With the dynamism in technology in this era, training has to be an ongoing thing to make sure that every new change in the technology sector is taught to the employees and that they are kept abreast with all developments in the internet industry.

All the respondents reported that they have the right equipment for work. Having the right and modern equipment when carrying out work is paramount in this business. Customers need the fastest internet that will not exhaust all their

data before they get what they are searching for. It is imperative therefore that Skyband equipment be the most advanced and that customers are able to do whatever they wish to do online as fast as they can.

Another issue that arose during these interviews with the 2 out of 6 respondents representing 33.3 percent technical support supervisors is that of giving rights of access to information to a few individual staff who are too busy to attend to calls from technical support employees out in the field. Sometimes these technicians in the field wait for a long time just to have an approval of a command in the system from system administrators at the network operating centre, in so doing causing delays in work. Employees out in the field are to be empowered with access to information for their work to be efficiently done. If they cannot be granted access for security reasons, then they have to be given attention as soon as they need it, to avoid delaying work.

4.3.3 Reliability

Table 12: Reliability dimension measurement for staff

Detail	Strongly agree	agree	uncertain	disagree	Strongly disagree
Skyband has capability to reduce outages	3 (50%)	3 (50%)			

Reliability dimension measurement for staff, Source: Field study, January 2015

Respondents show that Skyband has the ability to reduce outages, with all the 6 respondents representing 100 percent in agreement with the statement. This means Skyband has the ability to provide timely uninterrupted internet services and is willing to solve customer's problems thereby rendering the services reliable.

Some 2 respondents out of 6 representing 33.3 percent brought in issues of prioritizing to sort out problems from friends who are connected to senior staff members. That defeats the whole purpose of providing universal services to customers. That type of service delivery is of poor quality and cannot be relied upon.

5 respondents out of 6 representing 83.3 percent proposed for an improvement on the backup link to improve on the reliability and reduce outages. Seems though with a number of fibre links connecting Skyband internet coming in through different countries ie Zambia, Mozambique, still downtime challenges are faced. Staff respondents proposed that Skyband should connect to VSAT (very small aperture terminal) that was originally there but due to operational costs it was disconnected. It is believed that, this link would provide a very strong and solid connection with limited disruptions apart from the fibre connection of which if there is a problem in any of the countries connecting fibre to Malawi, Skyband is always affected and its customers have no access to internet services.

4.3.4 Assurance

Table 13: Assurance dimension measurement for staff

Detail	Strongly agree	agree	uncertain	disagree	Strongly disagree
Are customers satisfied with service delivery levels	1 (16.7%)	4 (66.7%)		1 (16.7%)	

Assurance dimension measurement for staff, Source: Field study, January 2015

One staff respondent out of six representing 16.7 percent strongly agrees that customers are satisfied with service delivered and four respondents out of six representing 66.7 percent agree to the same. One respondent representing 16.7 percent disagrees to this statement. In conclusion to the assurance dimension of service quality, 83.4 percent are assured of a satisfactory service.

When staff is assured of the service they are delivering, they work with greater confidence, knowing what they are doing is exactly what was expected of them to do at a given time.

A general feeling from all the six members of staff interviewed is that they can do more to improve on this. With suggestions given such as enhancement of interaction with customers through dinners or luncheons in order to appreciate the challenges they face on daily basis thereby improving the service rendered.

Two respondents out of six representing 33.3 percent in qualitative data collection touched on improving on the corporate social responsibility platform to create awareness of what Skyband doing and give back to the stakeholders and introduction of various promotions well known by all members of staff which can be easily explained to the outside customers. It was understood that most employees do not know what promotions Skyband is offering and can hardly explain or sell the same to people who could be Skyband's would be customers.

4.3.5 Responsive

The responsive service quality dimension means willingness of the company to help its customers in providing them with a good quality and fast service.

Table 14: Responsive dimension measurement for staff

Details	Strongly agree	agree	uncertain	disagree	Strongly disagree
Does Skyband shutdown for maintenance		1(16.7%)	5 (83.3%)		
Skyband responds to queries within a day	2 (33.3%)	3 (50.0%)	1 (16.7%)		

Responsive dimension measurement for staff, Source: Field study, January 2015

1 respondent out of 6 representing 16.7 percent agree that Skyband shuts down for maintenance while 5 respondents out of 6 representing 83.3 percent are uncertain. If respondents are uncertain it shows some element of negativity in the response or that respondents are not sure of what happens during maintenance, whether there is shutdown or not.

2 respondents out of 6 representing 33.3 percent strongly agrees to that Skyband responds to customer problems within a day upon presentation while 3 respondents out of 6 representing 33.3 percent agrees to this statement, making 83.3 percent respondent rate in agreement that Skyband responds to complaints within a day and 1 respondent is uncertain. A conclusion can be drawn that most problems are responded to within a day.

From the interviews carried out, the indication is that Skyband does not inform customers when there is need to shut down for whatever reason. With 83.3 percent score of respondents uncertain it is doubtful that the customers are informed on shutdown schedule.

4.3.6 Empathy

Table 15: Empathy dimension measurement for staff respondents

Detail	Strongly agree	agree	uncertain	disagree	Strongly disagree
If maintenance is done while in transmission, are customers given prior warning of disruptions	3 (50%)	3 (50%)			

Empathy dimension measurement for staff respondents, Source: Field study, January 2015

The empathy dimension which shows how a service provider feels for its customers has a response of 3 respondents out of 6 representing 50 percent responding with strong agreement that customers are given prior warning of disruptions in service and 3 out of 6 representing 50 percent in agreement to the same. Which means the empathetic dimension is satisfactory in this case with a 100 percent positive score in agreement.

4.4 Secondary data analysis

The secondary data analysis involved reviewing the call centre reports on how customers calling in or sending emails to report problems with internet were assisted.

4.4.1 Analysis of call centre reports

The customer call centre operating 24 hours a day on 8 hour shifts seven days a week was put in place in such a way that, when a complaint comes in, the following data is entered in the job card ticketing data base, this shows:- Time of complaint, name of customer, complaint presented, time finally assisted. Upon

entering the complaint in the job card, the customer is given his/her ticket number to act as a reference when making follow ups. The standard requirement is that Skyband should respond to a complaint within 24 hours of presentation.

Below is a chart of entries in the data base at the customer call centre drawn according to percentage of customers presenting different problems within the selected sample of fifty customers picked at random for a period of three months:-

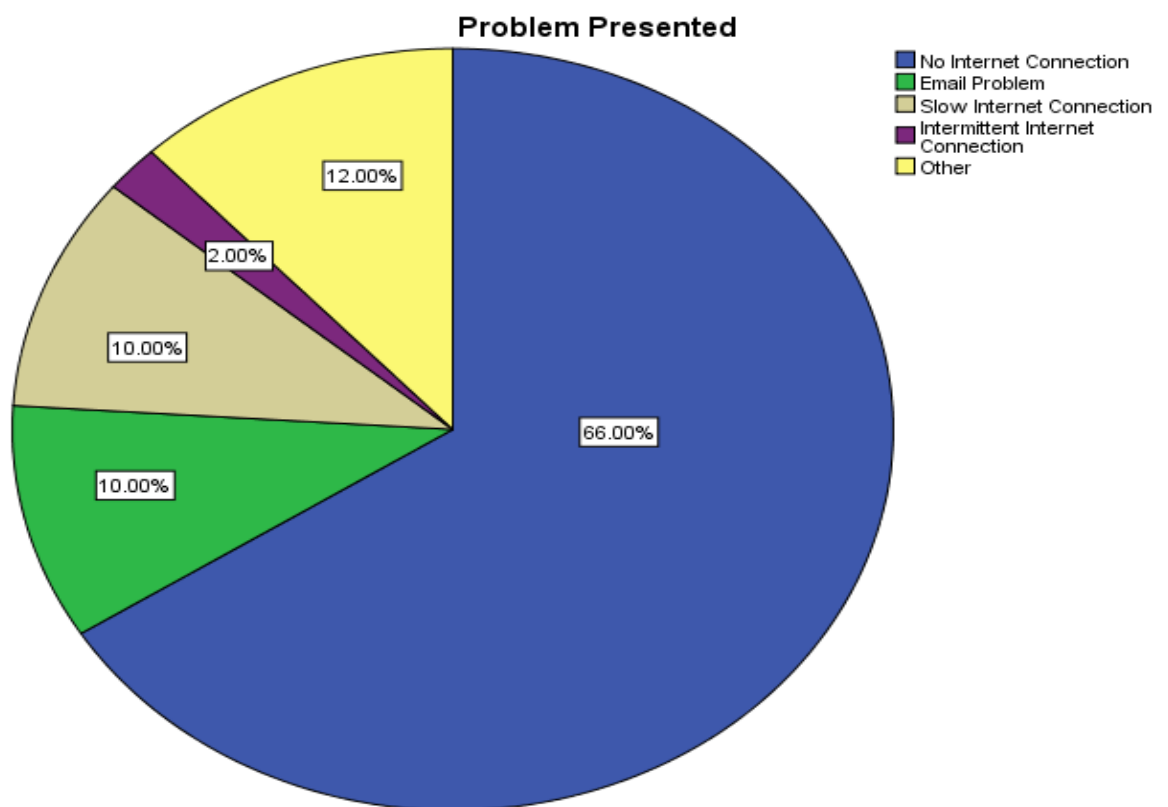


Figure 3 – Pie Chart: Analysis of call centre reports, Source: Field study, January 2015

As in the pie chart above, information is entered according to problem presented. In the sample study, the problems are in five categories as indicated, namely:- no internet connection, email problem, slow internet connection, intermittent internet connection, and other problems. Upon solution being provided, the ticket is finally closed and time taken to rectify an

individual's problem is shown. Where a customer has not been assisted, the ticket still remains open and is easily picked by the responsible staff to follow up on why he has not been assisted.

4.4.2 Time taken to resolve a problem

The time taken to rectify a fault is grouped in five categories and the codes used to enter data in the template are as indicated against the time:-

Less than 1 hour - 1

2 – 12 hours - 2

1 day - 3

more than one day – 4

other problems – 5

Table 16: Time taken to resolve a complaint

Time frame	Frequency	Percent
<1 Hour	6	12.0
2-12 Hours	13	26.0
1 Day	14	28.0
>1 Day	16	32.0
Total	49	98.0
Missing System	1	2.0
Total	50	100.0

Time taken to resolve a complaint, Source: Field study, January 2015

From a sample of fifty customers lodging various complaints to Skyband customer call centre within a period of 3 months, 6 customers out of 50 were assisted in less than 1 hour representing 12 percent rate. 13 customers out of 50 were assisted within 2 – 12 hours representing 26 percent. 14 customers out of 50 were assisted in a day representing 14 percent. 16 out of 50 were

assisted in more than a day representing 32 percent. One customer's information on how long it took to get assisted was not entered in the data base.

From the analysis above, it is noted that from the fifty complaints received, a total of 33 customers out of 50 representing 66 percent were assisted within 24 hours while 16 customers out of 50 representing 32 percent were assisted in more than one day representing a lower rate than those that are assisted within 24 hours.

With 66% of customers assisted within 24 hours of presentation of their problems, it is a positive feedback to the standard requirement. This information compared with the information from the staff and customer questionnaire analysis means that most customers are assisted within a period of 24 hours.

4.5 Triangulation of primary and secondary data using service quality measurement dimensions

4.5.1 Tangibility dimension

Tangibility which refers to the appearance of the physical surroundings, facilities, equipment, personnel and way of communication (Parasuraman et al 1996). When this dimension of service quality from the secondary data was triangulated with the primary data, the secondary data shows that 66 percent of customers presenting their problems to the call centre are assisted within 24 hours. The primary data on tangibility showed satisfactory results with an aggregate respondent scoring of 82.9 percent in agreement with the service provided.

This put together shows that the tangibility dimension encompassing equipment, personnel and way of communication of Skyband, gives a positive response to customers. When emails or phone calls are made by customers,

staff at Skyband uses their equipment to trouble shoot where the customer's problem is coming from. In so doing, the customers are assisted promptly by the personnel involved.

4.5.2 Reliability dimension

Reliability entails how the organization is performing and completing its promised service, quality and accuracy within the given set requirements between the organization and the customer.

The analysis of the primary data shows high levels of reliability with an aggregate score of 81.45 percent in agreement with the services rendered. With the secondary data revealing that 66 percent of customers were assisted within 24 hours of presenting their problems, this can be concluded that the service is reliable.

4.5.3 Responsive dimension

The responsive service quality dimension means willingness of the company to help its customers in providing them with a good quality and fast service. The responsive dimension in the primary data showed an aggregate score of 78.75 percent of respondents scoring in agreement with the response given by Skyband. This triangulated with secondary data which gave a result of 66 percent of customers being assisted with their problems within 24hours meant that on average, customers are respondent to on time. The interviews carried out with staff vindicate this result in the sense that staff try to assist a customer within 24 hours of problem presentation.

4.5.4 Assurance dimension

Assurance refers to the company's employees being able to gain trust and confidence of the customers.

The secondary data provided information that 66 percent of customers are assisted than 32 percent that fail to be assisted within 24 hours, then trust and confidence in the service Skyband provides is there. The primary data provided information that customers are assured of the service provided with an average score of 80.4 percent. This means that both customers and staff agree that the assurance dimension of service quality where trust and confident is the ultimate goal is there. The secondary information cements it all.

4.5.5 Empathy dimension

This refers to how Skyband cares and gives individualized attention to their customers in their quest to make them feel extra valued and special. The primary data gave a positive response with an average scoring of 82.25 percent in agreement with the empathetic position of Skyband from both customers and staff respondents. The secondary data triangulates this by providing a result of 66 percent of complaints being responded to within a day which means a positive response to the standard requirement.

5.1 Summary of findings

From the analysis of customer respondents, staff respondents and desk research, the results show that there are some high levels of satisfaction with the service that Skyband is offering. This has been proved by the results of the primary research triangulated with secondary research. From all the five dimensions of the SERVQUAL model, namely, tangibility, responsive, assurance, reliability and empathy, the results from measuring service quality were positive.

A number of issues came out though during the interviews that depicts some levels of dissatisfaction that require Skyband's attention and these are:-

1. Delays in sending technical support teams when a problem has been reported.
2. Delays in responding to telephone calls.
3. Prioritizing sorting out problems that are presented by customers related to senior members of staff.
4. Recommendation to add manpower in the technical support team.
5. A need for training of the employees in all the key sectors of the service provision ie call centre, technical support teams, marketing and sales section.

Skyband has a number of best practices put in place to provide satisfactory services to its customers. These are:-

1. Customers should be assisted within 24 hours upon presentation of a problem.

2. Generation of numbered tickets and submission of the ticket number to customers for purposes of following up within Skyband and by the customer.
3. Conduction of trouble shooting of problem presented and try to solve the problem before visiting the customer site.
4. Technical staff provided with modern tools suitable for existing technology all the time.
5. Customers should have fast, reliable, uninterruptible internet all the time.

Skyband ticketing system seems to be producing positive results, customers are assisted and follow ups are done timely due to the system that leaves a trail of unsolved problems. Skyband is striving to keep up with the standard requirement of helping customers within 24 hours of problem presentation though about 32 percent of customers were not assisted within the stipulated time frame revealed by the analysis of secondary data.

Customers expressed dissatisfaction with the system of solving problems remotely through phone calls while trouble shooting within Skyband premises. Customers want the physical presence of Skyband technical employees on their site to appreciate what they are going through and show empathy through physical presence.

It became apparent from the interviews that some customers were uncertain that the internet service has had no downtime in more than three months. There were some high levels of uncertainty in the scorings. From the discussion with staff respondents, a proposal was made to reinstall the operation of the VSAT backup system that was discontinued due to operation costs unlike relying on the fibre connections that are currently used. This vindicates the customer's uncertainty when responding to the Likert scale

question on whether Skyband has provided uninterrupted service for three months.

From the primary research, it transpired that there are a number of bottlenecks to the provision of quality services, these are:-

- 1 Lack of properly organized staff trainings in the organisation.
- 2 Customers not believing that their problems can be resolved remotely.
- 3 Lack of expertise in customer care management by the call centre staff.
- 4 Prioritizing solving problems presented by customers related to staff members.
- 5 Lack of a reliable backbone to provide alternative route for supply of internet when the fibre connections are down.
- 6 Delays in responding to phone call from customers rather than email.

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 Proposed Strategy for service quality improvement

Goal:- To provide uninterrupted, fast and reliable internet service to customers.

Objectives: -To respond to customer problems within 24 hours.

- To have a solid and reliable backup system of connectivity during downtime of the normal fibre system in place.
- To sensitize and train customers on internet problem solving.
- To train employees on the provision of fast and reliable internet service and how to provide good customer care to clients.
- To train employees on customer complaint management.
- To have a policy on interacting with customers/stakeholders.

-To create internal awareness of products skyband is offering customers. This shall include awareness on promotions being carried out at a given time.

How to attain the objectives:-

- Skyband shall maintain the operation of the present customer call centre system. Improvements shall be made in phone call handling system to make sure customers are not held on the phone for too long.
- The operations of a VSAT (very small aperture terminal) shall be revived to provide a backup link to the fibre connections currently used. Special budget shall be set up to cover the operational costs.
- Skyband shall improve its level of interaction with customers by holding dinners, being involved in corporate social responsibility and carrying out promotions. At the same events, Skyband shall use the opportunity to sensitize customers on problem solving system in place.
- Employees training shall be an ongoing thing at Skyband. Every section head shall work hand in hand with the human resource section in identification of training needs so that employees are equipped with the right skills to carry out their duties. A special budget shall be set aside for training.
- There shall be a formal customer complaint management system in place that will be given special attention and one senior officer shall be assigned to supervise the system.
- Skyband shall sensitize its employees on all products offered to customers. Staff shall be given the opportunity to understand and appreciate the products offered, even sample the products before selling

externally. Promotions shall be made known to employees first before being offered to customers.

- Skyband employees shall be sensitized to separate operations of business and personal relationships. Employees shall treat all customers equally.

5.2.2 Proposed Framework for service quality improvement

Customer call centre	There shall always be staff present at the call centre 24 hours, 7 days a week to provide support. Staff at the customer call centre shall respond to phone calls and emails promptly upon receiving them. They shall enter customer's information and ticket the customer as soon as they get information. Trouble shooting shall begin immediately. If the problem can be solved remotely, they shall do so as soon as possible in keeping up with the prescribed 24 hour problem response standard. If a problem has not been resolved within 24 hours, a customer shall be notified and be given assurance that his problem is receiving the necessary attention. Where necessary the reason for failure to resolve the problem shall be given.
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<p>Technical support team</p>	<p>Technicians shall be given the necessary equipment and materials for work. They shall be provided with the necessary support from the network operating centre where need be.</p> <p>Technicians shall only report at the customer's site upon failure to resolve the problem presented remotely.</p> <p>When going to customer's site, Skyband identification cards, Skyband official work suits and protective gear shall be worn.</p> <p>A customer's premises shall be respected and technician shall remain disciplined and shall refrain from making unnecessary noise while working.</p>
<p>Staff training</p>	<p>All members of staff shall be trained in their specialized duties at all times. Where there is a new development in the service sector, staff shall be informed and where there is a training need, training shall be carried out.</p> <p>Specialized personnel shall be engaged to train staff in different fields of their areas of specialization.</p>

System Administrators	<p>The system administrators shall work hand in hand with the staff at the call centre and the technician support team providing technical support in the field.</p> <p>They shall provide timely response to the requests from all staff in need of their services.</p>
Sales and Marketing staff	<p>The sales and marketing staff shall do the marketing intelligence in order to know the changes in the business sector and provide the information to the company for immediate adaptation to the changes.</p> <p>This team shall provide prompt response to customer's needs and even to would be customers. They shall be provided with the rightful information needed.</p> <p>Staff shall have knowledge on all products available and the operation of the products being offered.</p> <p>Where promotions are being offered to the customers, the team has the responsibility to sensitize staff in different sections on the promotion offers.</p>

Management team	<p>Management's responsibility shall be to make resources available for work in all sections of the organization.</p> <p>They shall provide direction and maintain control of the operations of the organization and provide strategic directions of the business to the organization and create a conducive environment for strategy buy in by the entire members of staff.</p> <p>Monitoring and evaluation of the system performance shall be observed by them.</p> <p>Management shall provide resources for the provision of an alternative backup link in case of downtime, In this case, reinstallation of a VSAT operation as recommended shall be the option to look into or provide an alternative to the suggestion.</p>
Customers	<p>They shall be treated with great respect and given priority at all cost. Their problems shall be resolved within 24 hours upon presentation. Where this has failed, customers shall be notified with reasons for failure. Caution shall be exercised on what information to divulge to a customer.</p>

5.2.3 Technical Support

From the discussion herein, it has transpired that Skyband service quality is satisfactory but needs some attention to perfect it to a higher level.

A mention was made in the primary data by customer respondents that Skyband needs to employ more technical staff to catch up with the business growth, as viewed in the discussion, it has transpired that, the present staff, given the necessary training and support to work, could be enough to carry out the work.

It has been noted that there has been wastage of time due to delays in coordination of work between system administrators and technicians. If this could be perfected, the technical support team could be efficient thereby creating time for extra responsibilities.

5.2.4 Customer Call centre

The customer call centre needs to be quick in their response to customers. They need to respond to phone calls the same way they respond to emails. Their customer care skills could improve with proper training in customer care management.

5.2.5 Management

Management needs to be proactive in providing alternative solutions to business needs. The proposal to link up to a VSAT could be the way to go. The company should not be dependent on fibre alone. The VSAT, much as it is expensive to operate, could provide the lasting solution to unnecessary downtimes.

5.2.6 Sales and Marketing

The sales and marketing team has a responsibility to create awareness of the products Skyband is offering, to let the customers know of new products that are on the market. That can make them save money through internal knowledge sharing and create internal awareness of the activities/promotions that are on the market. This would help other members of staff to explain and sell the products to would be customers.

5.3 Conclusion

The research helped to unearth the gaps that have been there in the provision of quality services of internet at Skyband Corporation Ltd. Skyband needs to develop a training policy that will be properly followed and employees will attain formalised training through this process. It is disheartening to note that employees are yearning for training in an organisation that is in a dynamic sector of the economy that requires frequent updates of information both to the employee's memories and office servers.

Equipment alone without proper training on how to use it extensively cannot help to grow this type of business but knowing best how to use equipment in a multitasked way would be the best.

Employees have to learn to be disciplined to separate business and friendships. Using friendship links to prioritize which customer to assist defeats the whole purpose of quality service delivery.

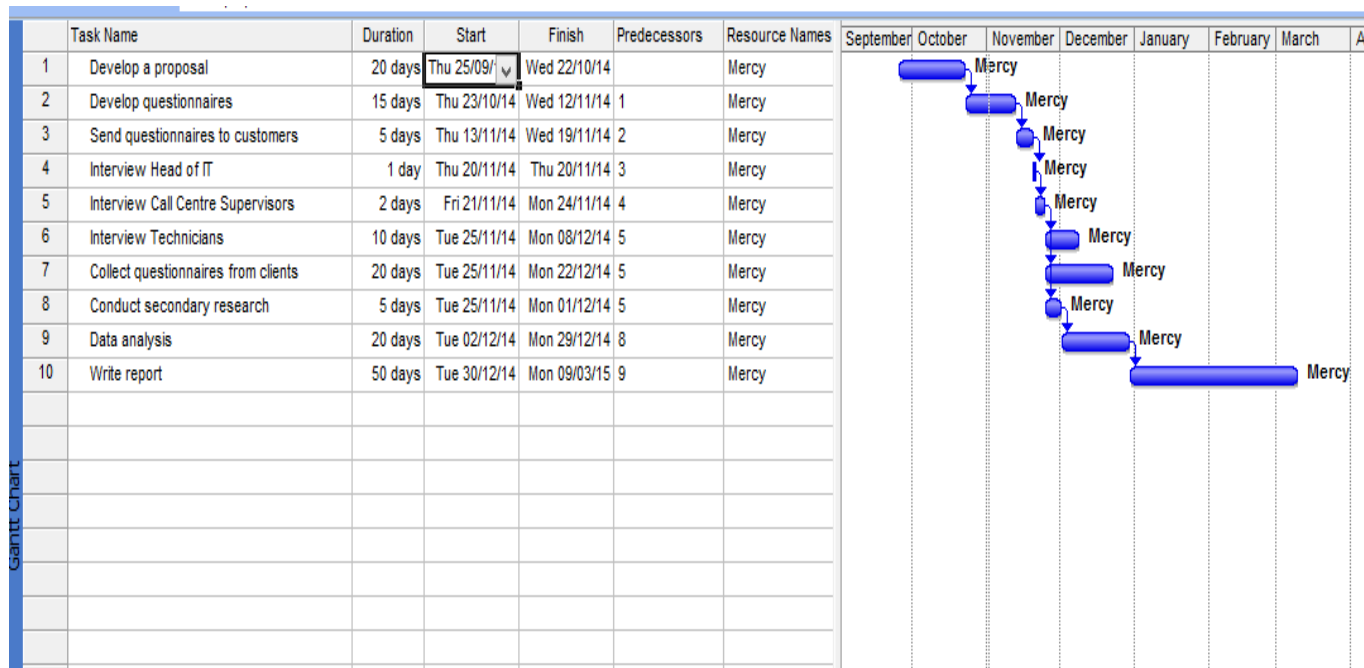
Developing a strong backup link to an ISP business could put Skyband at the top of its service delivery. With some customers expressing some levels of

dissatisfaction, it is imperative to be on top of things to make sure business is not disrupted due to bad decisions that would kill business in the process.

The proposed strategies and framework work as a starting point towards gaining a bigger market share in this business sector. Full adoption of these would create a competitive advantage for Skyband against its competitors thereby growing the business to even greater levels and remain “the leading internet service provider” in the ISP market.

5.4 Appendices

Appendix 1: Timeline for the study



Appendix 2: Customers questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE TO CUSTOMERS

Dear Sir/Madam,

Am carrying out a study on “Assessment of service quality of internet at Skyband”. This study is for academic purposes. You have been listed as a participant that should answer the questionnaire below. Please be assured that information submitted by you will not be held against you and will be kept with the highest confidentiality it deserves.

I thank you for sparing your time to provide the information sought.

Section A BIO DATA

Please tick the box that describes your identity.

1. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
2. Age group: ☐ 20 – 30yrs, ☐ 31 – 40yrs, ☐ 41 – 50yrs, ☐ 51 – 60yrs
3. Number of years with Skyband internet services:-
☐ 0 – 2yrs, ☐ 3 – 4yrs, ☐ 5 – 6yrs, ☐ 7 – 8yrs, over 8 years.
4. Which of the following describes your level of education:-
 - a. University education ☐
 - b. Diploma holder ☐
 - c. Secondary education ☐
 - d. Primary education ☐
 - e. Other (Please specify) ☐

Section B

In this section, please tick in a section that best describes how you rate Skyband internet services:-

I choose Skyband because:-

Details	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Uncertain (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
1. It is flexible in dealing with its Customers and strives to solve problems within a day.					
2. It has personalised services, tailor made to suite your business needs					
3. It is easy to get through phone					
4. emails are answered fast e.g within a day					
5. It has customers interest at heart					
6. Employees understands customers specific needs					
7. They respond to outage (downtime) within a day.					
8. It can record one outage within a space of three months					
9. Employees are always willing to help customers					

10. Are you satisfied with the way Skyband responds to your internet problems. If not, what are your expectations.

11. Please suggest how Skyband can improve its services to serve customers better.

Appendix 3: Staff questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE TO STAFF

Dear Sir/Madam,

Am carrying out a study on “Assessment of service quality of internet at Skyband”. This study is for academic purposes. You have been listed as a participant that should answer the questions below. Please be assured that information submitted by you will not be held against you and will be kept with the highest confidentiality it deserves.

Thanking you for sparing your time to provide the information sought.

Section A BIO DATA

Please tick the box that describes your identity.

1. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
2. Age group: ☐ 20 – 30yrs, ☐ 31 – 40yrs, ☐ 41 – 50yrs, ☐ 51 – 60yrs
3. Number of years of service with Skyband Corporation:-
☐ 0 – 2yrs, ☐ 3 – 4yrs, ☐ 5 – 6yrs, ☐ 7 – 8yrs, over 8 years.
4. Which of the following describes your level of education:-
 - a. University education ☐
 - b. Diploma holder ☐
 - c. Secondary education ☐
 - d. Primary education ☐
 - e. Other (Please specify) ☐

Section B

The questions below are meant to find out your perception on how you deliver customer service support:-

Details	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Uncertain (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
1. Products are specifically made to provide customer					

satisfaction					
2.The liberalisation of the internet market has brought in stiff competition.					
3. Skyband has the capability to reduce outages of internet					
4. Skyband responds to customer queries within a day.					

5. Do you think employees have the right and up to date equipment to assist customers?

6. Is Skyband able to reach out and get many customers with the advertising campaigns that are carried out?

7. How do you rate the relationship with customers? Do you think customers are satisfied with the service delivery levels?

8. How are staff trainings for customer service personnel conducted, are the personnel kept up to date with technology advancements?

9. How can Skyband reduce outages of internet.

10. Please provide suggestions on how the company can improve on the quality of internet service provided to customers.

11. Does Skyband shut down for maintenance?

12. If maintenance is done while still transmitting? Are customers given notice of interruptions beforehand?

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